

## CORRECTIONAL SERVICE CANADA

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## Security Threat Groups (STGs): Measuring Disengagement or Disaffiliation?

**Current administrative categories such as “inactive” involvement status and “terminated” status for STGs do not explain why offenders have disengaged or disaffiliated from their STG.**

### Why we are doing this study

Security Threat Group (STG)<sup>1,2</sup> disengagement or disaffiliation is a key priority for correctional jurisdictions as decreasing STG involvement may enhance the safety and security of institutions and minimize the impact of STGs for operational staff and on population management strategies. Disengagement can be defined as the *process* by which individuals remove themselves from a STG, which may not be linear in nature. In contrast, disaffiliation suggests that the individual no longer identifies with the STG and the affiliation no longer exists.

The STG disaffiliation literature indicates that push (internal to the STG, e.g. violence within STG) and pull (external to the STG, e.g. pro-social associates) factors may motivate an individual to leave a STG.<sup>3</sup> This study will explain how inactive<sup>4</sup> and terminated<sup>5</sup> statuses are measured within the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) and suggest how CSC may examine STG disengagement or disaffiliation in the future.

### What we are doing

Security information from CSC’s Offender Management System (OMS) was examined to identify STG affiliated offenders with an inactive status between FY2013-2014 and FY2018-2019 or offenders with a terminated STG affiliation between December 2009 and January 2020. Case management documentation was also explored.

### What we have found so far

Recent research comparing active versus inactive STG affiliated offenders shows unique profiles for both men and women. Inactive men were more likely to have committed violent offences and be serving longer sentences while inactive women were serving shorter sentences and had committed drug related offences.<sup>6,7</sup> However, the reason(s) why an offender may be considered inactive in their STG is not routinely documented in OMS case management

information nor is this information captured in OMS’s STG affiliation screen. Therefore, differentiation between offenders who have made the decision to disengage from the STG versus offenders who no longer participate in the STG due to operational decisions aimed at reducing the presence of STGs within correctional institutions.

Examination of the “terminated” status provided explanations for 44% of these offenders,<sup>8</sup> with the majority of reasons provided due to push factors (e.g. disbanding of the STG, offender being forced out, etc.) or a lack of information to validate the affiliation. This STG designation was not uniformly reported in OMS case management documentation,<sup>9</sup> and when reported, seems limited to a subset of push factors that may explain disaffiliation.<sup>3,10</sup>

### What it means

Current administrative methods for tracking disengagement and disaffiliation do not allow for a nuanced understanding of the variety of factors that may precipitate these processes for STG affiliated federal offenders. Enhancing the reporting requirements in OMS related to reasons for an inactive and terminated status would improve future research capacity in these areas; the disengagement and disaffiliation literature should inform any changes to ensure a uniform data capture process. Qualitative research (e.g. interviews) would enhance CSC’s understanding of offenders’ decision-making related to disengagement and disaffiliation; the interplay of factors related to affiliation, cultural identity, and ethnocultural identity on this process; and to map out the timeline or process of discontinuing STG involvement.

### For more information

For more information, please e-mail the [Research Branch](#). You can also visit the [Research Publications](#) section for a full list of reports and one-page summaries.

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<sup>1</sup> STGs: formal or informal ongoing offender group, gang, organization with three or more members that may include: street gangs, Indigenous gangs, prison gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, traditional organized crime, white supremacy groups, Asian gangs, subversive groups, terrorist groups, or hate groups (CSC, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) is currently reviewing and updating the STG definition.

<sup>3</sup> Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Disaffiliation from Security Threat Groups: A review of the literature* (RR 21-02). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

<sup>4</sup> An inactive status indicates that the offender was not involved in STG activities but had not formally disaffiliated. This term aligns with the process of disengaging from a STG.

<sup>5</sup> A terminated status means that the offender was no longer STG affiliated. This term aligns with disaffiliation from the STG.

<sup>6</sup> Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Federal women offenders’ involvement in Security Threat Groups* (STGs; RIB 21-13). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

<sup>7</sup> Cram, S. & Farrell MacDonald, S. *Examining involvement status of Security Threat Group affiliated men offenders* (RIB 21-24). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

<sup>8</sup> Farrell MacDonald, S., Cram, S., & Smeth, A. *What does Security Threat Group (STG) termination signify* (RIB-23-03). Ottawa, ON: CSC.

<sup>9</sup> Reasons for termination status may not be recorded in case management information if it is protected information.

<sup>10</sup> This may be due to the fact that disaffiliation situations such as a beat out would be an identifiable incident whereas a gradual disengagement process may not be as noticeable.